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CHOOSING SPRING CLOTHES FOR THE CHILDREN

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A radio talk by Miss Clarice Scott, Bureau of Home Economics, delivered through Station WRC and 34 other stations associated with the National Broadcasting Company, April 18, 1930.

So much is being said about clothes these days! In the shops, on the streets, in fact, most every place where people get together there's something to be said about the new spring clothes. I've listened closely for a word about new outfits for the children, but it seems they are a bit neglected amidst all this turmoil over the long and the short of mother's styles.

A mother recently said to me as she hastily glanced over the clothes designed at the Bureau of Home Economics "I never have to give much thought to Bobby's and Jean's clothes for you know children's styles change so little from year to year". Children's styles do change very little from year to year, she was right, but there is a vast difference in the cut, fit, and comfort of the many garments on the market. Watch any group of children at play. I'm certain you will notice how annoying and how hampering some of the present day outfits are.

Health authorities say that next to food, rest and environment, there is possibly nothing so important for the welfare of a growing child as proper clothes. This is because muscles are developing, bones are growing, and the children are learning through incessant play just how to handle their bodies. All clothes should be fashioned so as to permit and encourage this.

Are you wondering just how to discriminate between proper and improper clothes for your growing child? Study children at play, watch how some clothes restrict while others allow perfect freedom. This is your starting point. Now, at the top of your shopping list, lest you forget, why not write down the three questions to be kept in mind while selecting garments for the youngsters.

First, "Will it protect?" This seems very simple, you say, for we ordinarily think that clothing protects only when it keeps out the cold and wet of winter. However, a child's summer clothes must also protect by allowing proper radiation of body heat and elimination of body wastes. We sometimes forget that children are very active regardless of weather and unless wisely dressed may get too warm. As one doctor has put it, the body is like the engine of an automobile. The skin is the radiator. If the clothing is too heavy or not of suitable material the body becomes over-heated, just as the engine does when radiation is insufficient. Over-heating of the body is dangerous, quite as much as that of the engine. Lighten the child's clothes as the weather grows warmer. Choose light, airy garments that absorb moisture readily, and can be washed well and often; otherwise, they will be unhygienic and unhealthful. The light weight cottons are ideal for all spring and summer garments, as they can be found in smooth textures that resist soil, and can be washed easily. They also come in soft textures that require no starch, and in fast colors that stand up under the sunshine and frequent launderings. Protect your child further by selecting bright colors easily seen by the motorist. Yellow, rose, orange and red will provide a safety zone around your youngster whereas, dark blue, brown and tan do not attract attention. Besides, children usually have a flair for bright colors and enjoy them immensely.

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Try on the garments rather than depend on a mere size label at the back of the neck for good fit. Test them out with a little action, for the second question to guide your selection is "Will it be harmful in any way?" If clothes catch the arms or legs, bind through the crotch, pull back against the throat, or get in the way in general, they are harmful and deserve no place in your child's wardrobe. Choose loose garments with room for growth and action. However, don't depend on large sizes to provide this needed room. They often make matters worse. Select clothes with width across the back and chest, low cut necklines, fitted shoulders, short raglan sleeves or none at all. These features are especially adapted to play and growth and they are neither restricting nor quickly outgrown.

The new outfits for spring and summer will not be exactly up-to-date unless they play a part in child training, so the third question is, "Will this garment teach something"? Encourage self-reliance by selecting clothes that are easy to put on and take off. Look for openings that are conveniently placed and of a type easily managed, such as front plackets fastened with good size buttons. You will be surprised to find how much even a very small child can do for himself.

All the while you are keeping these questions in mind, "Will it protect?", "Will it be harmful in any way?" and "Will it teach something?", watch for good design. It is always important but it must be built on the needs of the child.